



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



GOV. DAUGAARD PROMOTES STATE VETERANS HOME

At the request of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Governor Daugaard has created public service announcements (PSAs) promoting the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.

The PSAs were distributed to all radio and tv stations in South Dakota and bordering states.

In his message, the Governor, stressed that personal choice is a way of life at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. A Home that offers residents a continuum of care for changing needs and is dedicated to promoting each resident's independence, individuality, personal dignity and privacy. In his message he also noted the high-quality home-like atmosphere where comradery and friendships grow.

Our Special thanks to Governor Daugaard and our great friends at South Dakota Public Broadcasting for creating this wonderful promotional message.



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CHARLES MIX COUNTY APPOINTS NEW VSO

Todd Breen has retired from his post as Charles Mix County VSO. The Commission has selected Jerry Seiner to serve as their new VSO.

The Charles Mix County Veterans Service Office hours will be 8:00 am—4:30 pm Mondays and Tuesday and 8:00 am—12:00 noon on Wednesdays. Jerry's email address is jseiner@charlesmixcounty.org.

Please join SDDVA in welcoming Jerry to our partnership.

BATTLE FOR SERVICE MEMBERS ACT

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, a member of the U.S. Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, along with Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio), today introduced the *Better Access to Technical Training, Learning, and Entrepreneurship for Servicemembers Act (BATTLE for Servicemembers Act)*, to better connect servicemembers with resources to secure quality education and good-paying jobs as they transition from military service to civilian life.

"The men and women who serve in the U.S. military are some of the smartest, brightest and best-trained individuals our country has to offer," said Rounds. "Giving them the tools they need to utilize their talents as they transition into civilian life is but one way we can show our gratitude for their service."

The bill would increase participation in programs that help servicemembers transition to civilian life. Specifically, the service members would choose a two day training session on either higher education, technical training, or entrepreneurship. Instead of continuing with an opt-in option, the bill would make the training opt-out to encourage greater participation by servicemembers. According to a 2017 GAO report, only 14 percent of servicemembers completed at least one additional two-day training program after completing the three day required portion of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

Currently, TAP training covers a curriculum that includes sessions on veterans' benefits, financial planning, and post-service employment. The *BATTLE for Servicemembers Act* would supplement the current training and better tailor the sessions to fit the needs of servicemembers.

The legislation is supported by Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Student Veterans of America (SVA), Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA), the Millennial Action Project and the Bipartisan Center Action.

SDNG ENLISTED ASSOCIATION

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman and Program Manager Erin Bultje spoke at the South Dakota National Guard Enlisted Association's state conference.

Bultje introduced South Dakota Joining Forces to the group.

SDNGEA's mission is to perpetuate the National Guard; to hold all enlisted personnel of the SDNG in proximity with each other; to promote and maintain adequate educational instruction which will endeavor to advance the status, welfare, and professionalism of the enrolled members and to maintain adequate national security through the endeavors of the enlisted members of the SDNG.



MJFSVH HEROES READ TO HOT SPRING YOUTH

Veterans from the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home take time out of their busy schedules to read to students at the Hot Springs Elementary School

Far from just a heartwarming partnership, promoting connections between generations is a great opportunity to look at then and now. These young students bring a sense of vibrancy and fun to the center of our heroes, while our heroes gain a sense of purpose.



SD ARMY NATIONAL GUARD NAMES SOLDIER, NCO OF THE YEAR

The South Dakota Army National Guard evaluated four enlisted Soldiers and three non-commissioned officers, April 7-8, for the state's Best Warrior Competition, which names the Soldier and Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year, respectively.

Sgt. Cory Staab, Detachment 1, 842nd Engineer Company, was named the 2018 SDARNG Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year and Spc. Bailey Ruff, Detachment 2, 842nd Engineer Company, the 2018 SDARNG Soldier of the Year.

Traditionally, the competition is a three-day event that assesses the participants' ability to fulfill the total Soldier concept, which is designed to bring out the best in every Soldier through physical fitness, education and leadership, among other aspects. The winners were selected using a paper board this year due to inclement weather during the scheduled event.

The paper board review consisted of the competitors' major command's evaluations, which resulted in cumulative scores based from their Army Physical Fitness Test, weapons qualification, awards, and military training and education, to name a few.

At regionals, they will be tested on a variety of skill sets, which can include warrior tasks and battle drills, written essays, uniforms and appearance, drill and ceremony, land navigation and map reading, first aid, weapon systems, physical fitness and general Army knowledge.

The Region 6 Best Warrior Competition is scheduled for May at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, where Staab and Ruff will represent the SDARNG against Soldiers from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and North Dakota.

Joining Ruff in the SDARNG Best Warrior Competition were Spc. Spencer Kirkpatrick, 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, the 2018 Soldier of the Year runner-up/alternate; Spc. Jesse Thorne, 235th Military Police Company; and Spc. Eric Sanders, 881st Troop Command.

Staab's fellow NCOs in the competition were Sgt. 1st Class Clint Sandness, SDARNG Medical Command, the 2018 NCO of the Year runner-up/alternate, and Sgt. Tyler Jacob, 82nd Civil Support Team.

While Staab and Ruff will move on to represent South Dakota in the regional competition, and potentially nationally, it was the year leading up to the competition that ultimately affects the organization.



Sgt. Cory Staab



Spc. Bailey Ruff

VA'S NEAR-TERM PRIORITIES UNDER ACTING SECRETARY ROBERT WILKIE

Curt Cashour, VA Press Secretary, offered the following remarks on the VA's near-term priorities under new leadership:

"Under VA's new leadership, which is now firmly aligned with President Trump and his priorities, the department's operations have improved in many ways. In a number of cases, employees who were wedded to the status quo and not on board with this administration's policies or pace of change have now departed the VA.

Under Acting Secretary Wilkie's leadership, senior VA officials are now on the same page, speaking with one voice to veterans, employees, and outside stakeholders, such as Congress and veterans service organizations, and are focused on a number of key priorities in the short term.

These include:

Main Goal

Restore regular order by working closely with the White House to implement the president's priorities for the VA.

Specific Near-Term Priorities

- Work with Congress to get community care reform legislation passed by Memorial Day.
- Finalize a decision on the department's electronic health record (EHR) modernization.
- Work with the White House to get Admiral Ronny Jackson confirmed by the U.S. Senate."

SFVAHCS VETERANS BENEFITS FAIR/OPEN HOUSE

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System will be hosting a Veterans Benefits Fair and open house of the newly constructed oncology and specialty medicine buildings on Thursday, May 17, from 4:00-6:00 p.m.

In addition, the "Missing Man" table and chair to be located near oncology will be dedicated at this time.

The Missing Man Table, also known as the Fallen Comrade Table, is a place of honor, in memory of fallen, missing, or imprisoned military service-members.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Apr 27-29—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood
May 8—SFVAHCS Baby Shower
May 10—VABHHCS Baby Shower
May 11—AHEC Improving Veterans Care Conference—University Center—Sioux Falls
May 11—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)
May 19—MOPH State Convention—DAV Headquarters in Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
May 22—SDDVA Mini Conference via Skype—10:00 am (CT)
May 24-25—PVA Disabled Veterans Fishing Tournament—Chamberlain
Jun 7-10—American Legion State Convention—Spearfish
Jun 14-17—VFW State Convention—Sioux Falls
Jul 7—Veterans for Veterans Annual Poker Run—Mitchell Depot—1:00 pm (CT)
Jul 11—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Jul 12—Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Cemetery Grand Opening—Sisseton—11:00 am (CT)
Jul 13 —VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Education Classroom—Fort Meade—10:00 am (MT)
Jul 14-17—DAV National Convention—Reno, NV
Jul 21-25—VFW National Convention—Kansas City, MO
Jul 26—VABHHCS Veterans Town Hall—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre
Aug 20-24—SDDVA Benefits School—Ramkota—Pierre
Aug 24-30—American Legion National Convention—Minneapolis, MN
Sept 14—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)
Oct 10—SD Veterans Commission Meeting—Soldiers and Sailors Building—Pierre—8:00 am (CT)
Nov 16—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—Domiciliary Auditorium—Hot Springs —10:00 am (MT)



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